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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND INR/AA

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SUBJECT: The CCM Nominates a President: an Incomplete Democratic Transition

Classified by Pol-Econ Chief Judy Buelow for reason 1.4(b)

REF: A) Dar es Salaam 888, B) Dar es Salaam 855, C) Dar es Salaam 832, D) Dar es Salaam 732 and previous

1. (C) Summary: It's only the second week of May, but the October Presidential election has already been decided, now that the ruling CCM party has selected Jakaye Kikwete as its nominee. Over a decade after the introduction of multiparty democracy in Tanzania, the CCM is still a juggernaut that easily overwhelms a fragile and fragmented opposition. Far from taking CCM predominance for granted, the party loyalists who gathered in Dodoma revealed their determination to maintain party unity, and to safeguard against any future encroachments by the opposition. The CCM's week-long nomination extravaganza also revealed a persistent nostalgia for the old single party state, and a convenient confusion between the roles of the government and the party. The CCM still relies on international solidarity from other current (or recovering) single-party states, especially Zimbabwe. Tanzania installed the mechanism of competitive democratic elections years ago, but it will be many years more before fully democratic practices take root and flourish. End Summary.

Debate and Reconciliation within the CCM Family

2. (U) Foreign Minister Kikwete's nomination to the Presidency was not exactly a surprise, but CCM watchers had envisioned many scenarios which could have produced a different nominee. Kikwete was always the front runner, with many allies among the top echelons of the party. Nonetheless, many other party luminaries, possibly including President Mkapa himself, strongly opposed Kikwete and were prepared to block his candidacy. Many of the Embassy's government contacts quietly favored Salim Salim, an intellectual with long previous service as Foreign Minister and the OAU Secretary General. Prime Minister Sumaye clearly believed that he had a chance to prevail, despite his lackluster campaign and rumored personal corruption; he was noticeably embittered after he was knocked out in the early rounds of the CCM nomination process. A deadlock was not out of the question; prior to the CCM nomination event in Dodoma, the rumor mill focused on plausible dark horse candidates who might step into the breach.

3. (SBU) A party insider described late nights and acrimony during the first two rounds of the nomination process, which narrowed the original field of eleven declared candidates down to five, and then three. These two rounds were conducted in private, first in the Central Committee, and then in the National Executive Committee (NEC). The NEC membership consists of some 200 individuals, including all of the 36 members of the Central Committee. President Mkapa is also the Chairman of the CCM, and in this capacity, he chairs both of these entities and the Party Congress. In addition to holding top party posts, the members of the NEC and the Central Committee are Ministers, Members of Parliament, and other top government officials. These individuals are the de facto leaders of both the CCM party and the Government.

4. (U) The CCM Party Congress, technically the highest organ of the CCM, then convened to elect the nominee from the three finalists. The Party Congress convenes once every five years for its regular sessions, with additional extraordinary sessions to nominate CCM candidates for electoral office. The Party Congress includes the members of the Central Committee and the NEC, with the balance of its nearly 1800 members consisting of mid-level CCM functionaries from all over the country. When the Party Congress finally

voted, it was a model of transparency. Each member marked a ballot in secret, and cast it in one of several ballot boxes that appeared to have been borrowed from the National Electoral Commission. In the Congress, Kikwete won the party's nomination overwhelmingly, on the first ballot.

15. (SBU) For all the procedural correctness of the vote, it is probably safe to assume that most delegates to the CCM Party Congress had been strongly influenced by corridor discussions with the NEC and Central Committee members in their midst. The Party Congress was above all a ceremonial event, and an opportunity to reaffirm CCM ideals. Diplomats, representatives of foreign "sister parties," and the press all turned out in force to the Party's massive, if under-utilized, headquarters building on a Dodoma hilltop. Delegates, like convention-goers everywhere, wanted to have a good time. Virtually everybody wore an emerald green shirt and a bright yellow cap, and stood ready to wave miniature CCM flags and shout party slogans on command, usually to the beat of traditional music. The vote to amend the CCM party constitution provided an interesting contrast to the vote for the nominee. The whole Congress adopted, by noisy acclaim and with nary a dissenting voice, a series of amendments that further increased the NEC's power in the party and in the government itself.

The Voters Watch Hopefully from the Outside

16. (U) While there are no reliable national opinion polls, it is a safe bet that the Congress' choice of Kikwete is popular with the man in the street. Charismatic and personable, Kikwete gained visibility during his 1995 candidacy for the presidency. In that contest Kikwete had also been one of the three finalists, and he had received more votes than any other candidate in the first round of voting. In the end, however, he lost out to compromise candidate Mkapa, after the 1995 Party Congress deadlocked. Over the years, many of our Tanzanian interlocutors have expressed disappointment with that outcome and hope that Kikwete would eventually prevail.

Party Unity above All Considerations

17. (C) For now, however, it's the CCM party leadership, and not the man in the street, who really elects Tanzania's President. The three finalists' speeches before the Congress revealed an electoral campaign directed exclusively to the 1,800 people who represent the top party organs. The speeches contained almost no appeals to the wider national electorate: no promises of a chicken in every pot, few sentimental references to the Tanzanian family, and very little reference to policy at all, beyond a generalized commitment to eradicate poverty. Each finalist emphasized his personal qualifications, in keeping with the guidelines for selecting presidential candidates that the party had established earlier in the electoral cycle. The finalists all emphasized their educational achievements, their loyalty and long service in the government and the party (making little distinction between the two), and their dedication to maintaining the Union between mainland Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

18. (SBU) National Unity was a theme common to all speakers who addressed the Party Congress, including the three finalists, President Mkapa, and a comedian who mimicked the mannerisms and the aphorisms of the late President Nyerere. The speakers all portrayed the CCM as the guardian of national unity, defending Tanzania from the dissolution of the union with Zanzibar, and from all manner of tribalism, regionalism or ideological dissention. Several called for the CCM to stand firm against any growth of the opposition, implying that political opposition threatened Tanzania's enviable peace and stability. In this, the opinions and attitudes expressed in the Congress probably do not differ much from those of the average mainland Tanzanian.

Bowling to the Inevitability of Kikwete

19. (C) Kikwete's nomination reflected the unspoken recognition that the CCM could not lose this election to any of Tanzania's struggling opposition parties, but the CCM could be defeated someday by an internal

schism. As the nomination process worked its way through the party mechanism, it became evident that the CCM would make every effort to safeguard party unity in 2005, in order to preserve CCM predominance over the long term. Speaking in his capacity as CCM Party Chairman, Mkapa called for a candidate who was "electable," warning that if the CCM's choice of candidate disappointed the people, they would drift to the opposition. Mkapa also urged the CCM to build support among Tanzania's young people. Kikwete is believed to have his strongest base of support among the party's youth wing, so many observers interpreted this exhortation as a signal that Mkapa was throwing his support to Kikwete's candidacy, even if he had opposed it before. All of the CCM's losing candidates conceded to Kikwete, and most did so graciously.

10. (C) It appears that most CCM party luminaries decided that, whatever their personal preferences, Kikwete was simply too strong to pass over or ignore. Because of his base of fervent supporters in the party and in the public, Kikwete may be one of the few CCM leaders with the capacity to mount a plausible electoral campaign outside of the party structure. The CCM opted against disappointing Kikwete again in 2005, forestalling the risk that he could leave the CCM and take his supporters with him.

The Zanzibar factor

11. (C) Troublesome little Zanzibar is the one big exception to the rule of CCM predominance. Zanzibar is semi-autonomous, electing its own President and House of Representatives. If the October elections on Zanzibar are free and fair, Zanzibaris are quite likely to elect the opposition CUF party to head their government. In the Congress, numerous CCM speakers implied that opposition gains threatened Tanzania's peace, stability, and continuation of the Union itself.

12. (C) Behind the scenes, the party leaders in the NEC and the Central Committee apparently went all out to shore up the CCM's faltering presence on Zanzibar. Just two days before the Party Congress convened, intense pressure from these officials persuaded Mohamed Gharib Bilal to relinquish his candidacy for the Zanzibari Presidency. Consequently, the Party Congress never voted on its candidate for the Zanzibar Presidency, and the incumbent President Karume never had to face an embarrassing challenge from within his own party. Zanzibaris in the CCM were presumably disappointed by the nominee to the National presidency. They might have expected the party would nominate one of their own, such as Pemba Island native Salim Salim. In nominating mainlander Kikwete, however, the CCM broke with the incipient tradition of alternating Zanzibaris with mainlanders in the top office. Outside observers can only speculate about what else the CCM inner circle might have promised to the party's hard-pressed Zanzibar contingent. The most burning question is one that has occupied Western diplomats and opposition CUF politicians for months: would the CCM again turn a blind eye if its Zanzibar contingent thought it needed to cheat to win elections in the Isles?

Reaffirming International Solidarity

13. (C) Of the many foreign guests at the CCM Party Congress, the most honored were the representatives of various national "sister" parties. Some of these represented the Communist Parties of single party states; many others represented former sole parties that still dominate the emerging multiparty system in their countries. The Chinese and Cuban Communist Parties sent representatives; so did South Africa's ANC, Mozambique's FRELIMO, Angola's MPLA, and the Congo's PPRD. The unchallenged queen of the gathering was Zimbabwean Ambassador Chipso Zindoga, representing ZANU-PF. Recognized from the podium and escorted conspicuously by her South African counterpart, Chipso was clearly well-known and popular with the CCM rank and file at the Congress.

14. (C) A group of Western diplomats attending the Congress recalled that Dar es Salaam had once been a haven for revolutionaries from throughout southern Africa. Political leaders from Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe not only have an ideological affinity; many of them also have a personal relationship that dates to the Dar es Salaam of the 1970s and 1980s. Some of the diplomats

commented on the sobering implications of this regional solidarity, especially among the SADC countries. They considered Tanzania's recent and very public support of Zimbabwe to be a signal that the region's sister parties intend to close ranks in defense of an "African" version of democracy, and to overlook any undemocratic techniques these sister parties might use to perpetuate their power.

15. (C) Comment: The CCM's week-long nomination extravaganza begs the question: just how democratic is Tanzania? Clearly, Tanzania is more democratic than it was in 1970s, when founding father President Nyerere consolidated single party rule and a state-directed economy. The 1992 introduction of a multi-party system opened a space for political competition. Democratic institutions such as the National Electoral Commission have built their technical expertise and gained experience in conducting elections. The public has had time to get used to the idea that, just maybe, political competition is natural, that policy debate doesn't lead inevitably to tribal conflict and instability, and that an opposition government on Zanzibar won't necessarily break up the Tanzania Union. Someday, perhaps years hence, a strong opposition party will emerge on the mainland, or the CCM will split, and the voters will be presented with a real electoral choice. In the meantime, the Tanzanians have the chance to develop the political maturity and the strong democratic institutions that may enable them to complete their transition to democracy peacefully. For now, however, the CCM party has chosen its candidate, and the 2005 presidential election is all over with except for the voting. End Comment.

16. (U) Please see Embassy Dar es Salaam's SIPRNet site for a complete update and background on the Tanzanian elections.

OWEN